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ABSTRACT

Interest is growing in planning and implementing new systems of holding child and family services accountable for results. The Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Project at the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has supported and built upon recent state efforts to develop these new accountability systems for child and family services. The RBA reports, including this case study, are intended to help share insights and experiences in designing and implementing RBA systems. This report on RBA in Georgia begins with a brief overview, which summarizes the key points in the case study. A section of sociodemographic information and information about the state's governance structure directs the reader to unique qualities of the state that have helped to influence its RBA work. A timeline of the most critical events in the design and implementation of RBA efforts is included, along with a list of the key terms and concepts used in the state. Each separate RBA effort is described in detail, including its history and impetus, those who initially sponsored the effort, and the legal mechanism behind the effort. In addition, the early champions and actors involved in each effort and the funding sources and resources that support the effort are noted, and the governance and coordination between this effort and any others that may exist are described. The design and implementation of each effort are also described in detail, including information about the planning of the effort; the selection of goals, indicators, and targets; the collection of data; and the ways in which stakeholders were involved. The report describes the state infrastructure that supports the effort, such as staff, computer resources, and training. Where applicable, the report describes the way in which program evaluation links to the RBA effort. Each section also includes information about how each effort is being used; the uses include planning, citizen engagement, programming, budgeting and contracting, and communication. A list of key contacts is provided, and a final section describes in detail the objectives, scope, and methodology of the study. The

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report includes a table summarizing points of distinction among RBA efforts in the eight states studied. (EV)

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Aiming for Accountability: Georgia. Reaching Results

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AIMING FOR ACCOUNTABILITY:

GEORGIA

Diane Schilder

Harvard Family Research Project
Cambridge, MA
1998

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Heather Weiss, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is today at the center of a national movement to promote information regarding how states and communities are developing processes to improve and redesign child and family services and policies. HFRP's pathbreaking research provides practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with timely, insightful information about effective child and family services and policies.

Disseminating its research widely, HFRP links people, programs, ideas, and resources together to create innovative services and family-sustaining policies. HFRP's research helps states and communities create systems to monitor and assess programs and services. Using HFRP research and analysis, schools, agencies, and communities are learning about the best strategies for successful programming to improve child and family outcomes.

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GEORGIA

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Interest in planning and implementing new systems of holding child and family services accountable for results is growing rapidly — presenting both opportunities and challenges for policymakers, practitioners, and program managers. The Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Project at the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has supported and built upon recent state efforts to develop these new accountability systems for child and family services.

Recent changes in welfare — with increasing responsibility at the state and local levels — have implications for these new RBA efforts. With welfare reform, states will be challenged to provide effective and efficient services for children and families with fewer resources. States have been given increased flexibility in the administration of programs, and it seems likely that they will be held more accountable for program results. In turn, many states are giving counties increased flexibility in administering these programs and plan to hold local service agencies responsible for results.

Most states are in the early stages of planning and implementing their RBA efforts. However, given the recent devolution of welfare as well as changes in managed care, these new accountability systems appear to be here to stay. While states have many promising approaches, they are finding a need for avenues to share resources and experiences, to learn about these new systems, and to obtain information about pioneering states' efforts. HFRP's RBA reports, including this case study, are intended to help share insights and experiences in designing and implementing RBA systems.

What is Results-Based Accountability?

Policymakers, service providers, and citizens use the term "results-based accountability" in many different ways. For some, this term refers to strategic planning with an emphasis on greater coordination of services around goals and desired results. For others, the term is used to imply a shift in responsibility from the federal to state and local levels and the corresponding reduction in regulation or "red tape" — that is, it refers to a replacement of "process regulations" (such as requiring certain credentials for foster care case workers) with a requirement for results data (such as reduced case loads). For others, the term is used to refer to data collection and reporting efforts.

At a minimum, the RBA efforts described in this report include the following four elements:

- Articulation of a vision about where the state or community would like to be;
- Development of goals and objectives;

- Public reporting of data on progress toward goals and objectives: and
- Regular use of RBA process and data.

Description of the Series

This case study report is part of a series of reports of state RBA efforts. The series includes eight state case studies and a cross-site analysis. The reports are designed to provide information about the design and implementation of the RBA systems in these states. In addition, each case highlights the state's unique lessons learned. The points of distinction of the RBA efforts in each of the eight states in the series are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Points of Distinction of State RBA Efforts

State	Points of Distinction
Florida	Florida's RBA efforts consist of three parts: statewide benchmarks, performance-based budgeting, and agency-level strategic planning. Several aspects of Florida's efforts are notable: • The active support and involvement by a variety of stakeholders, including the legislature and the private sector; • The strong focus on training and technical assistance in the state, provided by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and the legislatively-mandated Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability; and • The target budget approach used in the Florida Department of Children and Families, which identifies specific outcomes for the different populations the department serves.
Georgia	Georgia's RBA efforts include three parts: benchmarks for children and families, agency performance budgeting, and decentralization of some social services to the local level in exchange for a focus on results. In addition, the following characteristics distinguish the RBA efforts in Georgia: • The top-down and bottom-up approach to RBA, which focuses a variety of stakeholders on results; • The early support by foundations to enable an emphasis on meaningful, people-level results; • The climate of change that supports risk-taking and innovation; and • The establishment of mechanisms to address concerns about locally-determined strategies and accountability as well as statewide oversight.

Iowa	Iowa's RBA efforts consist of statewide measures, agency performance measures, and local-level measures. In addition, the following characteristics distinguish the Iowa case: • The use of public opinion polling, which has provided valuable citizen input; • The use of focus groups to enhance the RBA research process; and • Enterprise-wide strategic planning, which provides a framework for collaborative efforts among agencies to achieve common cross-site goals.
Minnesota	Minnesota's RBA efforts consist of statewide measures, child and family measures, agency performance measures, and local performance measures. The following characteristics also distinguish Minnesota: • The existence of multiple RBA efforts with differing origins and emphases, including the Executive Branch Minnesota Milestones, which focus on population-level goals and the legislature's performance accountability for state agencies; • The emphasis on "home grown" services, which leads to grassroots articulation and reporting of results data rather than a centralized RBA approach; and • The refinement of the Milestones and agency performance measures to build on lessons learned and to update the measures to reflect new priorities of the state's citizens.
North Carolina	North Carolina's RBA efforts consist of state agency performance budgeting, and a child and family initiative that focuses on results. In addition, the following characteristics in North Carolina are of note: • The role of the budget and planning offices in training, collecting, and analyzing performance budget data; • The political context in which the child and family initiative has been implemented and the way in which data have been used to expand this initiative; and • The quasi-experimental evaluation design used to measure the success of the child and family services initiative.
Ohio	Ohio's RBA efforts consist of a statewide framework for child and family services, decentralization of social services to the local level in exchange for a focus on results, and a state block grant and a new program that focus child and family services on results. In addition, the following elements in Ohio are noteworthy: • The strong commitment of the governor in supporting results-oriented child and family services; • Comprehensive planning efforts designed to streamline government services by focusing on results; • The greater flexibility given to county Councils in exchange for accountability that focuses on results; and • The messages from the state to the counties regarding state expectations to focus on results.

Oregon	Oregon's RBA efforts consist of a statewide framework for results, agency performance measures, and local measures. In addition, the following characteristics distinguish the efforts in Oregon: • The way in which Oregon has relied on champions as a critical element for success. Leaders in key places — the executive branch, legislature, and private sector — have all been critical to the penetration of the concept of the Oregon Benchmarks; • The power of well-trained, highly qualified staff at all levels, which has been critical in designing the RBA effort; • The requirement that the Benchmarks and strategic plans be revisited on a regular basis; • Citizen involvement as an element in the success of the RBA effort; and • The continuity of support for RBA efforts at all levels of involvement.
Vermont	Vermont's RBA efforts consist of a framework for child and family outcomes, a Department of Education (DOE) outcomes framework, and measures produced by the Agency of Human Services and the DOE. In addition, the following characteristics are significant: • The importance of establishing relationships and knowing key actors in the design and implementation of the effort; • The small size of the state, which creates relative ease in involving all stakeholders in the effort; and • The importance of foundation funding and technical assistance in establishing the RBA framework and allowing the state to be creative in using resources to implement RBA.

Audience

This case study report is part of our larger effort to disseminate information about RBA initiatives in states. The report is targeted to those responsible for designing and implementing RBA efforts for child and family services. As such, the cases include details about the history, design, implementation, and uses of each effort that could assist in designing and implementing similar efforts.

Format

Overview of Georgia

The report begins with a brief overview which summarizes the key points in the case study.

Georgia Context

A section of sociodemographic information and information about the state's governance structure directs the reader to unique qualities of the state that have helped to influence its RBA work. In addition, a description of the history and state/local culture provides details about the environment.

Timeline
The report includes a timeline of the most critical events in the design and implementation of the RBA efforts.

Terms and Concepts
A list of the key terms and concepts used in the state is included. Currently no standard set of definitions of RBA terms exists. States use similar terms for different concepts, and different terms for similar concepts. Additionally, we provide a list of acronyms specific to each state's RBA efforts.

Description of Each of Georgia's RBA Efforts
Each separate RBA effort is described in detail in the case study. Each of these separate efforts is described in bold and begins a new chapter. Each section begins with a description of the history and impetus of the effort, including a description of those who initially sponsored the effort (such as the governor, legislature, or agency). We also describe the legal mechanism behind the effort (such as Executive Order, legislative mandate, etc.). In addition, the early champions and actors involved in each effort and the funding sources and resources that support the effort are noted. We also describe the governance and coordination between this effort and any others that may be in existence in the state.

The design and implementation of each effort are also described in detail. We include information about the planning of the effort (including a description of strategic planning efforts); the selection of goals, indicators, and targets; the collection of data; and the ways in which stakeholders were involved. In addition, we describe the state "infrastructure" that supports the effort, such as staff, computer resources, and training. Finally, where applicable, we describe the way in which program evaluation — specifically outcome evaluation efforts — links to the RBA effort.

Each section also includes information about how each effort is being used. The uses include planning, citizen engagement, programming, budgeting and contracting, and communication. In certain instances, the uses have yet to be determined.

Key Contacts
A list of key contacts familiar with different aspects of the effort is provided. This list is included in order to direct the reader to the experts who are most knowledgeable about many of the details of this report.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology
This section explains in detail the objectives of the study, the methodology used, and the range of states included in the series.

OVERVIEW OF GEORGIA

Unique Features of Georgia's RBA Efforts

Georgia's results-based accountability (RBA) efforts for children and families began with data — the state's 47th place national ranking in the Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT data[1]. This low ranking mobilized policymakers, service providers, business leaders, local grant makers, and other citizens to devise a variety of outcome-based and locally-administered approaches to improve the health and well-being of the state's children and families.

Most distinctive among Georgia's efforts are:

- The top-down and bottom-up approach to RBA that focuses a variety of stakeholders on results;
- The early support by foundations to enable an emphasis on meaningful, people-level results;
- The climate of change that supported risk-taking and innovation; and
- The establishment of mechanisms to address concerns about locally-determined strategies and accountability as well as statewide oversight.

The combination of the climate of risk-taking and innovation and the foundation support sparked Georgia's efforts to develop a ten-year strategic plan to improve outcomes for children and families. This plan, *Together on a Bold Journey,*[2] provided the basis for Georgia's RBA efforts. It reflects the thoughts of many key stakeholders, including agencies, key state and local leaders, and private business. In addition, it outlines specific long-term state benchmarks and strategies for new policy directions in the areas of accountability, service strategy, financing, systems change, and governance.

Summary of Georgia's RBA Efforts

Policy Council for Children and Families' RBA Efforts: Acting on a recommendation in the strategic plan, the state established the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, a new governance structure designed to focus the separate initiatives for children and families on agreed-upon outcomes. The Policy Council is composed of business and civic leaders and managers of the state's health and human services agencies. It is responsible for defining core results; developing and adopting a comprehensive state plan to coordinate services; and

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[1] KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. *KIDS COUNT data book: State profiles of child well-being.* (1997). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. This publication provides data on the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children.

[2] The Children's Initiative. (1994). *Together on a bold journey: A strategic plan for children and families in Georgia.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

coordinating and evaluating services focusing on a single set of outcomes for children and families at both the state and county levels.

The Policy Council, now established in statute, was initially a temporary structure charged with developing state and community-level outcomes (called benchmarks in Georgia). Rather than engaging all of the business and community leaders in the detailed and technical process of determining each benchmark, the Policy Council set up a smaller working group to do the technical work and make recommendations to it. This working group, called the Results Accountability Task Force, examined the lessons learned and best practices from others and engaged in a systematic process of identifying, examining, and prioritizing possible benchmarks. With strong community input, the Policy Council approved many of the recommendations made by the Task Force. After identifying the benchmarks, the legislature authorized the Policy Council to continue for a period of time to oversee their implementation and use by child and family programs.

The benchmarks have been used to provide the framework for a variety of activities serving children and families. Foundations and non-profits are trying to align their efforts with the benchmarks, and the benchmarks are also being used to focus citizens in Georgia on improving results for children and families.

Family Connection Communities' and Community Partnerships' Results Focus: The movement to outcomes in Georgia has also meant changes in governance structures at the state and local levels. Specifically, these changes have created The Family Connection and the Community Partnerships.

The Family Connection, launched in 1991 with the support of the Whitehead Foundation, is a community-based family support effort that aims to improve outcomes for children and families through a collaborative process that promotes the integration of school, health, and human services in state government and local model communities. With the support of a small amount of funds from state appropriations, each partnership is encouraged to implement innovative service delivery ideas, close gaps in the continuity of services, and improve the overall ability of multiple agencies to serve families. Each community develops its own locally-tailored plan reflecting the needs and strengths of its citizens and neighborhoods as well as the goals articulated by the Policy Council. Data from the Family Connection communities will be used to improve collaboration and inform local program decisions as well as policy decisions made by the Policy Council.

Given the unique challenges posed by the new governance structures, support to communities has been essential in making the Family Connection work. This support has taken the form of training and technical assistance. Communities are focusing on building training and evaluation networks, examining what information must be collected and how to collect it, expanding the pool of evaluators providing assistance, and developing data warehousing technology.

The Community Partnerships are a sub-set of the Family Connection Communities, distinguished from them in that the Community Partnerships are authorized by legislation to develop and implement innovative approaches to overcome state and federal budget and policy barriers. The Community Partnerships were first established in 1997 for ten communities, and these communities developed comprehensive plans. Through the use of a variety of accountability and evaluation approaches, including self-evaluation, the Community Partnerships are working with the Policy Council to identify barriers to achieving results in the local communities.

Performance Measures Mandated by the Budget Accountability and Planning Act: The passage in 1993 of the Budget Accountability and Planning Act set into motion the movement toward institution of a statewide requirement that all current expenditures reflect performance measures. Under this legislation, each agency must produce a strategic plan, and the state as a whole must produce a strategic plan. The Act also stipulated that comprehensive evaluations of each state program be conducted by the General Assembly. The development of the statewide plan is the responsibility of the Office of Planning and Budgeting (OPB) and in 1997, it presented the first plan, focusing on six major areas, to the General Assembly. Agencies are currently working on the development of their own strategic plans, and OPB has dedicated time and staff to this effort. The intent is that with time, the data on results from state agencies will be used by the legislature to make budgeting decisions.

Georgia's RBA work demonstrates the importance of diverse representation, strong leadership, and solid relationships. Those involved in the development and implementation of results-based initiatives in the state note that diverse representation is essential, not only because of the strong local component in the state's RBA efforts but also because of its citizen legislature. Strong leadership has been equally important, particularly within the Policy Council, which has spearheaded much of the accountability work. As with many states, the Georgia experience points to the importance of relationships in making any accountability effort work. These relationships extend between local communities and state government as well as through the state's deliberate strategy of collaboration within and across communities. These characteristics, in addition to the strong support of foundations and a context in which urgent reform of child and family services was required, have helped the state to rethink radically how it approaches child and family services in a manner that focuses on results.

GEORGIA BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sociodemographic and Economic Status[3]

In 1995, Georgia had a population of 7.2 million. Approximately 70 percent of its residents were Caucasian; African-Americans composed an additional 27 percent of the population. In general, Georgia's immigration rate has been low. In 1990, 65 percent of the state's residents were born in the state; only 2.7 percent were immigrants. In 1995, almost 27 percent of Georgia's residents were under the age of 18, which reflected the national average of 26.2 percent.

In 1995, Georgia's per capita income was $21,741; the median income of families with children was $35,400. Fourteen percent of all Georgians, and 21 percent of all children under the age of 18 lived in poverty; this reflects the national average of 20.8 percent during that year. In 1995, unemployment in Georgia was 4.5 percent; this was lower than the U.S. rate of 5.3, ranking Georgia 31st in statewide unemployment for that year.

Political Context for Children and Families[4]

Georgia's governor, Zell Miller (D), began his second and last term in 1995. Georgia has a predominantly Democratic legislature; the majority party of both the house and the senate is Democratic, and has been so historically. As in Vermont (See case in this series), Georgia's legislature is considered to be part-time;[5] it meets annually in January for only 40 days. Neither the House nor the Senate has term limits.

Each of Georgia's 159 counties has either a Board of Commissioners or a sole Commissioner that has no jurisdiction over the allocation of state and federal funding for child and family programs. With the exception of their limited control over state and federal funds, counties have a great deal of power in Georgia. In addition to carrying out state responsibilities at the local

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[3] Information for this section was obtained from the following sources: Morgan, K.O., and Morgan, S. (1997). *State rankings, 1997: A statistical overview of the 50 United States.* Lawrence, KS: Morgan Quinto Press; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current population survey* and *state poverty rates*, online at www.census.gov; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; *Statistical abstract of the United States, 1996*. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration (116th Edition). *KIDS COUNT data book: State profiles of child well-being.* (1997). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Most data are from 1995. Data from the *KIDS COUNT data book* reflect the condition of children and families in 1994.

[4] Information for this section was obtained from multiple sources, including: *The book of states, 1996-1997.* Lexington, KY: The Council of State Government; U.S. Term Limits, online at www.termlimits.org; and interviews with members of state, county, and local officials.

[5] Defined by Karl Kurtz, of the National Conference of State Legislatures, as having a small staff, with low pay, and a high turnover. See *Understanding the diversity of American sate legislatures, extension of remarks* (June 1992).

level, counties have a great deal of local power and are responsible for providing municipal-type services (water, sewer, waste disposal, law enforcement, etc.). Additionally, county governments operate airports, hospitals, and libraries.

Georgia ranks 45th based on a composite ranking of indicators of child well-being[6] Table 2, a selected listing of the child risk factors, illustrates this rating.

Table 2. Child Risk Factors

Rating	Year	State	U.S.
% of two-year olds who were immunized	1995	75%	75%
% of children in extreme poverty (below 50% FPL)	1994	11%	9%
% of 4th grade students who scored below basic reading level	1994	48%	41%
% of 4th grade students who scored below basic math level	1996	47%	38%
% of low birth-weight babies	1994	8.6%	7.3%
% of teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15-17)	1994	49%	38%

Local Culture[7]

Once a thriving agricultural state, Georgia was forced to diversify its economy after the effects of the Civil War and a boll weevil plague years later. Today, Georgia's economy relies on timber, manufacturing, and cotton and other textile manufacturing. The economic hardships of the state led to massive migration of both African-Americans as well as Caucasian residents. While the migration of Caucasian residents ended in the 1950s, Georgia's African-American population, as a percentage of the total population, is much smaller today than it was on the 1890s, as African-Americans left the state to find work in northern industrial cities with a greater tolerance for ethnic diversity.

As a result of powerful government at the local level, Georgia's governor is one of the least powerful in the country.[8] State government exists largely to promote industrial development and financial investment for the state. Government of the people is left in the hands of the local politicians.

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[6] Annie E. Casey Foundation. (1997). *KIDS COUNT data book: State profiles of child well-being.* Baltimore, MD: Author.

[7] Information for this section was compiled from *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, Encyclopedia Americana,* and Elazar, D.J. (1984). *American federalism: A view from the states* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Crowell, as well as from key informant interviews.

[8] *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.*

TIMELINE

1989	• KIDS COUNT ranks Georgia 47th in child well-being
1991	• Family Connection begins
1992	• Georgia Children's Initiative launched
1993	• Budget Accountability Act (SB 335) enacted
1994	• Interim Policy Council established
	• 10-Year strategic plan *Together on a Bold Journey* issued
	• Results Accountability Task Force established
	• Law authorizing the statutory Policy Council and the Community Partnerships enacted (SB 256)
	• Policy Council sworn in by Governor Zell Miller (December)
1996	• Benchmarks adopted by Policy Council
	• 10 Community Partnership candidates selected
	• State "barrier busting" process implemented
1997	• Terms of agreement defining roles and accountability negotiated between the Policy Council and Community Partnerships

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Currently no standard set of definitions of results-based accountability terms exists. States use similar terms for different concepts, and different terms for similar concepts. Table 3 describes the terms and concepts used by Georgia. Table 4 summarizes the acronyms used in this report.

Table 3. Key Concepts

Outcome/Benchmark: Quantifiable measure of progress toward objectives and goals
Goal/Results area: Desired long-term condition of well-being for children, families, or communities
Mission: Broad, comprehensive statement of the purpose of the organization, program or subprogram
Objective: Desired shorter-term condition needed to achieve long-term condition of well-being for children, families, or communities

Table 4. Key Acronyms

OPB:	Office of Planning and Budget
RBA:	Results-Based Accountability
SB:	Senate Bill
SYFA:	Savannah Youth Futures Authority

THE POLICY COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: THE STATEWIDE POINT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, the statewide point of accountability for children and families in Georgia, began its work in response to a statewide call for greater accountability. The Policy Council is responsible for defining core results, developing and adopting a comprehensive state plan to coordinate services, and coordinating and evaluating services.[9] It is considered the umbrella under which the work of many separate initiatives and programs is brought together to focus on a single set of outcomes for children and families at the state and county levels.[10,11]

Administratively, the Policy Council is attached to the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB), and is funded through state appropriation (approximately $150,000 annually). This funds salaries for the staff who coordinate and facilitate the Policy Council activities. Resources for data collection come from in-kind contributions from agencies and grants.

History of the Policy Council

Low Ranking on Child Well-Being Provided Impetus for Reforms

In the early 1990s, the Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT data reported that Georgia ranked 47th in the well-being of children and families. This low ranking mobilized policymakers, service providers, business leaders, local grantmakers, and other citizens to devise strategies to improve the well-being of Georgia's children and families. A major community strategy, called the Family Connection, was launched in 1991. Supported by funding from the Whitehead Foundation, 15 communities began the collaborative process of joining forces and blending resources, plans, and strategies for children and families. Redeployed staff across all major child-serving agencies (Departments of Education, Health, Human services, and Medicaid) formed a core team for state planning and community support. The early work of the Family Connection provided lessons in collaboration and a framework for understanding the level of effort that would be required to improve the quality of life for children and families. (See Family Connection Communities and Community Partnerships later in this report for a complete discussion of this effort.)

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[9] Georgia law: 49-5-254 G. Web site: http://murmur.arch.gatech.edu/results/site.1.html.

[10] The statutory Policy Council built on the work of an interim governor's Policy Council, which was established in 1994.

[11] Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families. (1994). *On behalf of our children: A framework for improving results*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Drawing on the lessons learned from the early days of the Family Connection Community, the state began engaging in a strategic planning process. In 1992, the Georgia Children's Initiative was launched with planning funds from the Pew Charitable Trusts. This initiative was designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the state of Georgia.[12] As a beginning step, a partnership of families, communities, advocates, business leaders, foundations, elected officials, private non-profit organizations, and six major state agencies engaged in the process of developing a 10-year strategic plan.

Process of Identifying Goals and Indicators

Stakeholder Involvement Was Instrumental in Development of the Strategic Plan

Significant efforts were made to ensure that key state and local leaders were involved and committed throughout the development of the strategic plan called *Together on a Bold Journey*.[13] These efforts were led by a core leadership team with executive sponsorship from the government agency partners, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, and key leaders from businesses such as Bell South and Southwire. These stakeholders were involved in developing a vision for children and families in the state. Designated leaders organized a planning structure to carry out the strategic planning process at the state and local levels. At the state and local levels, committees composed of key stakeholders were created to focus on specific aspects of the plan.

Interim Policy Council Designed to Carry out Recommendations of Strategic Plan

In response to the recommendations in the strategic plan, Governor Zell Miller issued an Executive Order to establish a Policy Council (subsequently known as the Interim Policy Council). This Interim Policy Council was composed of leaders representing business, government, advocacy, and policy leaders. The Interim Policy Council was charged with refining and adopting the 10-year strategic plan which was finalized in November 1994. This plan specified the state's long-term benchmarks and translated them into specific strategies for new policy directions in the areas of accountability, service strategy, financing, systems change, and governance.[14] The plan built on the innovative efforts in the state, including the Pre-Kindergarten Program, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, the Atlanta Project, the Family Connection, the SavannahYouth Futures Authority, and the Georgia Academy (See *Together On A Bold Journey* later in this report for full list of efforts).

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[12] The Pew Children's Initiative is the Pew Charitable Trusts' multi-year effort to improve the well-being of children and families through systems change. The foundation awarded grants to two states, Georgia and Minnesota. Minnesota's RBA efforts were also influenced by the Pew Children's Initiative. See *Aiming for Accountability: Minnesota* for more details.

[13] The Children's Initiative. (1994). *Together on a bold journey: A strategic plan for children and families in Georgia*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

[14] The Children's Initiative. (1994). *Together on a bold journey: A strategic plan for children and families in Georgia*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Five major areas for improvement were specified in the strategic plan:

- Child health;
- Child development;
- School performance;
- Family functioning that promotes a child's healthy development; and
- Economic capacity.[15,16]

The strategic plan also recommended that the state develop new governance structures at both the state and county levels with the authority and responsibility needed to make improvements for children and families. This recommendation resulted in the passage of SB 256, the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families.

The Interim Policy Council then developed a working group called the Results Accountability Task Force to assist the Council in carrying out its activities. The Task Force was charged with:

- Establishing clear benchmarks of progress to assist communities and the state in tracking the extent to which results are being achieved; and
- Developing a framework and recommendations for how to use results and benchmarks for policy and budget decision making.[17]

Members of the Task Force included legislators, business and community leaders, agency chiefs, and policy and budget analysts. The Task Force had staff assistance from two consultants and a state agency representative.

Results Accountability Task Force Developed Process for Identifying Goals and Benchmarks

The Results Accountability Task Force set up a systematic and deliberate process for identifying benchmarks around the five results areas. The steps to this process included:

- Reviewing the literature and meeting with experts;
- Setting criteria for selecting benchmarks;
- Using the critical factors analysis methodology to prioritize benchmarks;
- Presenting the preliminary list to communities for review; and

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[15] The Children's Initiative. (1994). *Together on a bold journey: A strategic plan for children and families in Georgia.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

[16] The Policy Council later determined that it was important to continue to focus on the five areas for improvement, but refined the wording and renamed them five critical areas.

[17] Results Accountability Task Force. (1995). *Report to the policy council for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

- Revising the list based on community contributions, data collection considerations, and the age group affected.[18]

The Task Force staff began by reviewing the literature and talking with key experts. The interim Policy Council directed the Task Force to examine the work of national experts and the experiences of successful states and communities. As part of the scan, the Task Force worked with Atlanta University. The Task Force hired a graduate student from Atlanta University who, as part of her study, developed and surveyed all 50 states regarding their efforts to establish results and to determine how states were using them. The Task Force specifically examined the Oregon Benchmarks and the Minnesota Milestones to learn from these two states' experiences, and on this basis, the Task Force recommended limiting the number of benchmarks and focusing on ones that could be measured at the county level.[19]

The Task Force used the information gathered from the literature review and discussions with experts to set criteria for selection of benchmarks. The Task Force agreed that benchmarks would be required to:

- Have a bias toward prevention;
- Be grounded in research demonstrating a link between the measure and the desired result;
- Be available at the county level; and
- Be updated regularly.[20]

After selecting the criteria and reviewing the literature, the Task Force assessed data that had already been collected in the state. The Task Force decided to include data from the Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT project, the Council on School Performance (which collected and reported data on the National Education Goals), and state agencies recommended by consultants and experts. The data which met the above criteria comprised the list of proposed benchmarks.

Next, the Task Force set up a process for prioritizing the proposed benchmarks and assessed them against the following standards:

- Magnitude of the problem (how prevalent it is and how much it affects the state's budget);

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[18] Results Accountability Task Force. (1995). *Report to the policy council for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

[19] See *Aiming for Accountability: Minnesota* and *Aiming for Accountability: Oregon* for a description of these states' efforts.

[20] Results Accountability Task Force. (1995). *Report to the policy council for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

- Seriousness of the problem (including whether there are serious consequences for not correcting the problem soon); and
- Feasibility of correcting the problem (whether the problem could be solved with existing technology, knowledge, and resources).

The Task Force members individually rated each proposed benchmark according to these factors. Then, the Task Force employed a consensus process to identify a list of benchmarks for each of the five areas for improvement. This list was reviewed by communities and then finalized. (See below for more details.)

Communities Helped Determine Benchmarks

Communities from throughout the state provided comments on the proposed benchmarks and provided advice to the Task Force. Initially, the Policy Council directed the Task Force to look to the Savannah/Chatham community, which had been tracking results for several years as part of an Annie E. Casey foundation-funded effort to improve results for young children and families. The county had received technical assistance and access to state-of-the-art literature on improving results for young children. Representatives from Savannah/Chatham County informed the Task Force of the lessons they had learned, including the importance of incorporating grassroots feedback. As a result, the Task Force deliberately established a step of garnering feedback from communities.

Collaborative boards, including service participants, in five Family Connection Communities participated in a review process on the draft set of benchmarks. The Task Force used the comments from the communities, including the input from Savannah/Chatham County, to identify 26 "core" benchmarks which would apply to all communities. In addition, selected benchmarks were designated as "optional" benchmarks for two purposes. First, the optional benchmarks allow Georgia's 159 counties to choose benchmarks that apply to them. Second, optional benchmarks are specified for priority issues for which current measures at the state level are not available. The intention is that once valid and reliable measures exist for these items, the designation of "core" and "optional" will no longer exist.

The benchmarks fall into the five areas for improvement that were identified in the 10-year strategic plan. Table 5 provides examples of selected benchmarks aligned with two of the critical areas.

Table 5. Example Benchmarks Recommended by Results Accountability Task Force [21]

Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families

Core

- Reduce the percentage of teenage mothers who give birth to another child;
- Reduce the confirmed incidence of child abuse or neglect; and
- Increase the percentage of children in foster care who are placed in a permanent home.

Improved Economic Capacity: Economically Self-Sufficient Families

Core

- Reduce the percentage of children living in poverty; and
- Reduce the percentage of female-headed families with children in poverty.

Optional

- Increase affordable, accessible, quality child care.

Task Force Developed Framework for Accountability

The Task Force also conceptualized an entire RBA framework for children and families. The framework that the Task Force developed shows the link between the benchmarks, strategies, results data, and budget decisions. The framework was formulated with input from a consultant, Mark Friedman, who has written extensively about RBA[22]. The Task Force invited Friedman to present information about RBA and to make recommendations about linking results data to strategies and budget decisions. Friedman provided input about how Georgia could use its benchmarks to make decisions about state and community programs. The Task Force adapted Friedman's ideas to fit Georgia's specific needs.

The framework represents an important shift in thinking and planning from the usual "wish list" thinking of merely sustaining a program to considering what it takes to improve results for children and families. The framework required that the state first define results and benchmarks, which gave weight to the work of the Task Force. In addition, the framework supported the vision of those working on SB 335, the budgeting for results effort in the state (See The Budget Accountability and Planning Act of 1993 for more information). The framework and the proposed list of benchmarks were published in a report titled *The Results Accountability Task Force Final Report.*[23]

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[21] Results Accountability Task Force. (1995). *Report to the policy council for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

[22] For example, see Friedman, Mark. (1997). *A guide to developing and using performance measures in results-based budgeting.* Washington, DC: The Finance Project.

[23] Results Accountability Task Force. (1995). *Report to the Policy Council for Children and Families.* Atlanta, GA:

General Assembly Makes Commitment to the Policy Council

The Georgia General Assembly made a commitment to the Policy Council by passing a law authorizing a statutory Policy Council and the Community Partnerships (See Family Connection Communities and Community Partnerships later in this report for a description of the Partnerships). The General Assembly used the Interim Policy Council Strategic Plan, *Together on a Bold Journey*, as a basis for the authorizing legislation (SB 256). However, the authorizing legislation included a provision stating that after December 31, 2000, the council will sunset. Sources noted that this was included because legislators felt that by that date, the framework and regular reporting of benchmark data would be well established and the Policy Council would no longer be necessary.

The framework for change described in *Together on a Bold Journey*, as well as the five results/benchmark areas, direct the Policy Council's work. The new statutory Policy Council adopted the 26 benchmarks identified by the Task Force. Like the Interim Policy Council, the new Policy Council includes a cross-section of state, business, civic, and community leaders, and the agency heads of the six state agencies most directly affecting children and families (See *Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families*, 1996, for complete listing). While the membership of the new Policy Council is different from that of the Interim Policy Council, this new body adopted the 26 benchmarks with little deliberation because, as sources noted, the benchmarks reflected the contributions of a broad consensus of Georgians from different backgrounds who shared a desire to improve child and family well-being.

Lesson Learned: Diverse Representation, Strong Leadership, and Solid Relationships Key in Development of Benchmarks

Representatives from business, government agencies, communities, as well as the legislature are among the key stakeholders involved in the Policy Council. Numerous sources attribute the involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders to the credibility and trust placed in the Policy Council. One Policy Council representative noted that having business people involved in the process is key to having buy-in, although keeping business partnerships involved is not easy. "Business partners will wear out so you need to lure them into the process. The more time invested, the more they are able to see the payoff of their investment." Furthermore, other Policy Council representatives note that government process is not "user friendly" to business representatives who believe in immediate action. Investing time in the process has led to greater understanding among the diverse groups of individuals about the problems as well as solutions. As relationships have been built, the Policy Council has worked together more efficiently and effectively in garnering support from throughout the state.

Two other important groups that have been involved in the Policy Council are legislators and community representatives. Involvement of legislators has been very important because Georgia has a citizen legislature, with no professional staff, that meets only 40 days a year. Sources noted

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Author.

that there is a constant challenge in keeping the legislature informed about Policy Council activities. By involving community representatives, the Policy Council has effectively reached grassroots organizations, which, in turn, communicate with their legislators. The top-down and bottom-up approach has been effective in gaining support for the Policy Council activities.

Strong leadership provided by the staff and key leaders of the Policy Council has also been critical in the success of the Policy Council. One agency manager noted, "We have had good leaders who are dynamic people. They are no-nonsense and cut to the chase. They see what needs to be done and take the steps necessary to make things happen." Furthermore, others noted that the trust in these key leaders has helped non-traditional groups to work together to find solutions to problems facing children and families in the state.

Uses of the Policy Council Benchmarks

Policy Council Issues Benchmarks Report to the Public

In 1996, the Policy Council issued *Aiming for Results: A Guide to Georgia's Benchmarks for Children and Families,* designed to provide critical tools for creating a results-based approach to decision making in Georgia.[24] The report has been widely disseminated and is available on the Georgia Policy Council's Web page (http://murmur.arch.gatech.edu/results). [25] Statewide data, as well as county-specific data are reported. The Web site and reports include the benchmarks, definitions, information on the significance of the benchmark, baseline data, data sources, considerations, and related measures. Table 6 provides an example of a benchmark related to the critical area of improved family functioning.

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[24] Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families. (1996). *Aiming for results: A guide to Georgia's benchmarks for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

[25] The Aiming for Results on the Georgia Web site has been developed in a cooperative effort among its three sponsors and several other organizations. It has been launched under the oversight of the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families' Committee on Results Accountability and under the direction of Laurie B. Dopkins, Ph.D. The technical contract for developing and maintaining the initial "Benchmark Database" phase of the Web site is held by the Georgia Institute of Technology, with the assistance of Georgia State University. Data collection for the Benchmark has relied on The Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University .

Table 6. Example Page from Benchmarks Report [26]

TEEN PREGNANCIES

Benchmark	Reduce the pregnancy rate among school-age girls
Definition	The number of pregnancies per 1,000 girls ages 15-17 The benchmark is constructed by adding the number of live births to girls ages 15-17 and the number of abortions to girls ages 15-17, and dividing by the total number of girls ages 15-17 in a given year, and multiplying the result by 1000.
Significance	Teenage pregnancy and childbearing are associated with a variety of negative consequences for both mothers and babies. School-age mothers are less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be unemployed, and, if working, more likely to earn less income than women who delay childbearing until at least the age of 20. Children born to school-age mothers face multiple risks, including being born low birthweight, dying before their first birthday, having problems at school, and growing up in poverty.
Baseline Data	In 1995, 9,716 girls ages 15-17 in Georgia were pregnant. This represents a rate of 67.5 per 1,000 girls ages 15-17. The rate for whites of that age is 47.9 per 1,000; for African Americans it is 111.8 per 1,000.

PREGNANCY, GIRLS AGES 15-17

	Number	Rate (per 1,000)
White	4,441	47.9
African American	5,182	111.8
Total	9,716	67.5

Since the beginning of this decade, the pregnancy rate among girls 15-17 in Georgia has moved erratically between a high of 71.5 per 1,000 in 1990, to a low of 65.5 per 1,000 in 1992, then rising again to 67.5 per 1,000 in 1995. Rates in both white and African-American populations mirror this fluctuation, with the white rate starting out at 51.7 in 1990 and falling to 47.9 per 1,000 in 1995, and the African-American rate beginning at 113.3 in 1990 and declining to 111.8 per 1,000 in 1995.

Data Sources	The Benchmark Database includes teenage pregnancy data for all Georgia counties, beginning in 1990. Data are available by race.

[26] Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families. (1996). *Aiming for results: A guide to Georgia's benchmarks for children and families.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

The Center for Health Information, Division of Public Health, Georgia Department of Human Resources, compiles these data.

Considerations

It is possible to break out these data at the subcounty level (city, town, zip code, or census tract).

The age range for this benchmark is limited to 15-17 for a reason. Pregnancies before age 15 are rare, and to include younger ages would reduce the overall rate and mask its significance. In some communities, however, the pregnancy rate among very young girls is growing and deserves special examination.

This measure underestimates the actual number of pregnancies because it does not include miscarriages, still births, and "unregistered" pregnancies.

Few data are available on the males who impregnate these young women. Research suggests that the males are several years older than the girls.

Related Measures

Percentage of pregnancies to girls ages 15-17 is an often-used measure. However, the proportion of pregnancies to school-age girls may result from changes in the pregnancy rate among women 18 and older rather than a change in the rate among 15-17 year olds.

Related benchmarks include: Repeat Births to Teenagers (second or higher-order births under age 20) and the New Family Index (first births to mothers younger than age 20, who are not high school graduates, and where there is no father's name on the birth certificate).

Data available from the birth certificate regarding the father include his name, date of birth, race, education, and Social Security number.

Benchmarks Used to Frame State Agenda for Children and Families and to Focus Georgians on Improving Results

The Georgia Policy Council is using the benchmarks to frame state activities for children and families. A source noted, "I think all of the departments have essentially bought into the 26 Benchmarks." The Policy Council has urged each state agency to align its activities with the 26 benchmarks. In addition, the Policy Council is using the benchmarks to frame the goals for the Family Connection Communities and the Community Partnerships. (See Family Connection Communities and Community Partnerships for a description of the Partnerships.) Sources note that all of the state agencies represented in the Policy Council have been involved in the Family Connection.

Foundations and non-profits in Georgia are also aligning their efforts with the benchmarks. For example, the Metropolitan Atlanta Community Foundation and the Atlanta Project have aligned their efforts with selected benchmarks. The Metropolitan Atlanta Community Foundation set aside $1.1 million over a five-year period to support an initiative called Early Start: Families Preparing for Success. This initiative focuses on improving the well-being of children ages birth through five and is aligned with several child and family benchmarks. The Atlanta Project has

also aligned some of its activities with selected benchmarks; current areas of focus include school readiness, economic development, and childhood immunization.

Benchmarks are also being used to focus citizens in Georgia on improving results for children and families. The Georgia Academy, a non-profit training and consulting organization, has sponsored multiple events to focus citizens and professionals from throughout the state on achieving results for children and families. Since the benchmarks are specified as broad population-level goals, leaders in the state note the importance of involving all Georgians in devising ways to improve results. The events sponsored by the Georgia Academy, with the support of the Woodruff Foundation and the public sector, have helped to achieve this goal.

In 1994 and 1996, the Georgia Academy, along with Georgians for Children, hosted a conference entitled "Achieving Results, Enhancing Community Capacity and Building Public Will." This conference was designed to cut across traditional program, budget, discipline, and public/private sector lines. The purpose of the conference was to develop comprehensive approaches to achieving specific results for children and families. At the 1996 meeting, the chair of the Policy Council announced the five critical areas for improvement and 26 benchmarks that the Council was promoting and suggested that these become the primary goals for Georgia to achieve. A total of 32 organizational and corporate co-sponsors supported the conference, and over 450 individuals participated.[27]

Lesson Learned: Reporting Results to Public Can Garner Support for Child and Family Services

Publicly reporting results data on a regular basis can help engage the public in a dialogue about the problems facing the state and the solutions to them. Sources informed us that using results data to engage the public can be an effective way to reengage citizens who may have "lost faith in government programs." Sources on the Policy Council noted that by demonstrating results for child and family services, "we have established a lot of credibility and trust in the state."

[27] Bittner, J.S., Blount-Clark, J., and Brantley, C. (1996). Partnering with Georgia communities to improve the well-being of children and families. *Georgia Academy Journal*, III, 3, pp. 9-12.

FAMILY CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS' RESULTS FOCUS

The movement to outcomes in Georgia has also meant changes in governance structures at the state and local levels. Specifically, these changes have created The Family Connection and the Community Partnerships.

History of The Family Connection

Family Connection Began As a Pilot with Foundation Funding
The Family Connection initiative officially began in 1991, when Governor Zell Miller challenged state agencies to work together to improve outcomes for children. The Joseph B. Whitehead foundation provided $5 million to 15 communities to work with the state to pilot changes in the way services were reaching children and families.[28] One of the framing principles of the Family Connection is to be results-oriented. Concrete and measurable improvements in the well-being of children and their families must be achieved. Services must be results-oriented, define specific improvements to be made, and measure the extent to which those improvements have been achieved.

The Family Connection began as a collaborative partnership of communities: the Georgia Departments of Children and Youth Services, Education, Human Resources, and Medical Assistance; and the Georgia Academy for Children and Professionals and Families. Each collaborative developed a unique, locally-tailored plan reflecting the needs and strengths of its citizens and neighborhoods.

The success of the 15 pilot communities led the General Assembly and the governor to expand the initiative to 86 communities. The General Assembly now provides state appropriations to these communities. The funding is designed as "glue monies" that allow local communities to implement innovative service delivery ideas, close gaps in the continuity of services, and improve the overall ability of multiple agencies to serve families. Funding for the communities is diversified, with 39 percent coming from grants and the remaining coming from state agencies.[29]

History of Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships Have Authority and Responsibility for Reaching Results
In 1997, the legislature and Policy Council decided to expand the authority of selected Family Connection communities to give them more responsibility over achieving child and family

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[28] Bittner, J.S., Blount-Clark, J., and Brantley, C. (1996). Partnering with Georgia communities to improve the well-being of children and families. *Georgia Academy Journal*, III, 3, pp. 9-12.

[29] Family Connection. *Family Connection fact sheet*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

results as well as increased flexibility. The Community Partnerships, which represent a subset of 10 Family Connection communities, were authorized by SB 256 in 1997. Partners from the Policy Council and from each of 10 communities negotiated the roles and responsibilities in the terms of agreement. The partners reached agreements regarding the respective authority and responsibility for achieving measurable results.

Currently 10 Community Partnerships developed comprehensive plans and implemented innovative solutions to state and federal budget and policy barriers. County governments designated a single organization as the Community Partnership organization for that county.[30] While the Community Partnerships were developed through the Family Connection communities, they have now been authorized by state and local governments as the legal entity accountable for results and collaborative change strategies.

The Community Partnerships were selected through a competitive process based on a set of criteria, including current levels of collaboration and strength of leaders. Each Community Partnership is responsible for:

- Achieving a core set of results defined jointly with the state-level Policy Council;
- Developing a strategic plan according to a set of principles jointly defined with the Policy Council;
- Consolidating local planning for existing and future initiatives for improving results for children and families; and
- Pooling resources across systems to accomplish desired results.

Process of Identifying Goals and Measures

Family Connection Articulates Vision and Defines and Prioritizes Goals
The Family Connection communities (including the sub-set of Community Partnerships) are required to target specific areas in which improved results are expected, and to develop new accountability measures which will be tied to budget and policy decisions. While each Family Connection community pursues its own vision for its children and families, the communities are required to focus on the five critical areas targeted by the Policy Council. (See The Policy Council for Children and Families: The Statewide Point of Accountability, for list.)

Each Family Connection community is required to develop a comprehensive strategic plan which includes the community collaborative vision and goals for improving the well-being of children, youth, families, and community. The plans must define and prioritize goals, assess the extent to which goals are being achieved, indicate how progress toward goals will be measured, identify conditions to be changed to meet the goals, specify strategies to meet the goals, and specify a means of adjusting the plan based on evaluation.

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[30] Georgia law: 49-5-260 G. Web site: http://murmur.arch.gatech.edu/results/site.1.html.

Tools and Training Assist in Results-Based Efforts

Each Family Connection community is given tools and training to assist it in developing goals and in creating and reporting results data. Five structures exist to assist with developing self-evaluation and accountability capacity: the Results Accountability Committee of the Policy Council, the Evaluation Steering Committee, and three staff committees who work under the Evaluation Steering Committee (evaluation, finance, and service strategy committees). These structures have provided assistance to the Family Connection communities, and as one source noted, "Any assistance we've asked for, we've received."

Communities are given tools, including a benchmarks document prepared by the Policy Council, an Evaluation User's Guide developed by an external consultant, a Community Self-Assessment Instrument, a fiscal inventory of children and families investments, and an inventory of services strategies that describe "what works." Each Family Connection community is also given training on use of on-line benchmark data through regional and statewide meetings. Capacity development in the use of benchmarks is also available on-line. Community assistance in planning, selecting measures, and reporting results is available from both Policy Council and Family Connection staff.

Sources note that the technical assistance and training have been important to Family Connection communities because of the unique challenges posed by these new governance structures. "We are used to having the state say 'do this, this, and this.' We would know what was expected and it was easy to do. Now, we need to define the problems and solutions." The assistance has been very important to local communities in understanding Family Connection as a process of defining goals, refining measures, and continuing to involve all key stakeholders in the community. Sources note that initially they had thought that the Family Connection was a product, but came to realize that it is, in fact, a process. They state that the technical assistance and training was helpful in understanding that working toward shared goals is a process that involves constant activity to reach desired results.

Building Capacity to Report Results Is Integral to Process

The Family Connection communities are building the local knowledge, skill, and technological capacity to collect and report results. A major thrust of the work in 1997 was to build capacity by building an environment that values results, as well as building data collection, data analysis, and data use. Communities are focusing on building training and evaluation networks, examining what information is needed to collect and how to collect it, expanding the pool of evaluators providing assistance, and developing data warehousing technology. In addition, an emphasis is being placed on using information for policy, management, and program decisions.

The Fiscal Year 1997 Family Connection analysis of 68 community self-assessments of progress reported an average of 10 benchmarks being adopted by each collaborative. Communities also reported a number of additional benchmarks for which state data were unavailable. In addition, process data were reported that were aligned with the benchmarks in 1996. Fifty-four Family Connection Communities reported self-assessment data on their status toward achieving results

in the five critical areas for improvement identified by the Policy Council. For example, in the area of healthy families, communities reported serving 31,158 children and 15,714 families. Communities varied in the types of services provided to children and families. In the area of healthy children, 36 communities reported completing health screens or checkups, 12 communities reported substance abuse prevention services, six communities reported pregnancy prevention services, and five communities reported violence prevention activities.

Family Connection communities are required to continue to collect and report results data on their local initiatives. During 1997, the Family Connection Communities were expected to continue to become oriented about the objectives, to frame and refine evaluation questions, to reflect on the findings, and to understand the implications of the findings.

Technical Assistance Critical for Community Partnerships Development of Results Data
Metis Associates, a national evaluation consulting firm, is developing the evaluation of the Community Partnership Initiative and the Policy Council's state-level strategies for building a practice and culture for budget accountability, RBA, and self-evaluation.[31] One aspect of this evaluation involves providing assistance to Community Partnerships in developing self-evaluation approaches that can be implemented to assess local progress toward attaining the benchmarks on the priority areas identified by the community. The evaluation assistance will help communities identify objectives and measures, develop self-evaluation capacity, and inform ongoing decisions. Community Partnership representatives report that this technical assistance is critical for the successful development of results data. While some individuals at the local level have training in data collection and reporting, many are trained as service providers and managers and do not have technical data skills. As a result, the assistance provided by the evaluation consulting firm is critical to the successful selection and reporting of results data.

Uses of Results Orientation

Results Data Will Be Used to Inform Decisions and to Enhance Collaboration
Data from the Family Connection will be used to inform local program decisions, as well as policy decisions made by the Policy Council. The Policy Council plans to use this information to recommend action based on the findings. The recommended strategies will be disseminated and communicated to the local communities. Local representatives for Family Connection Communities note that results data have been and will continue to be used as a tool to improve collaboration. Sources note that focusing on common goals and results alleviates some of the challenges for collaboration. Collaboration activities are time consuming and involve personal commitment. Sources note that while defining common goals involves time, they hope that the common vision will in the long run save time.

Focus on Results Used by Community Partnerships to Identify Barriers to Progress
Community Partnerships are working with the Policy Council to identify barriers to achieving

[31] Metis Associates Inc. Phase 1 Interview Protocol.

results in the local communities. Teams of representatives from the state and the communities have been established to identify approaches to reducing barriers in six areas: family support, tracking of birth data, incorporating health checks and outreach into a managed care system, Head Start and Pre-K coordination, duplicative state grant and finance issues, and streamlining intake and eligibility. Each of these teams has identified state-level efforts to address the issue as well as state-level parties that would be essential to resolving the issue. In addition, each team is identifying key elements for resolving the problem.

Local communities and the Policy Council are using the Community Partnership evaluation process to reflect on their goals and priorities. They also plan to use the results data to assist in policy and budget decisions. Specifically, the Policy Council received evaluation findings in July 1997, and made decisions based on recommendations for mid-course action. In addition, Community Partnerships plan to make budget and policy decisions based on the results.

Savannah Youth Futures Authority: An Example of a Community Focusing on Results
The Family Connection Community and Community Partnerships have been designed to ensure that local communities share insights and lessons learned with the Policy Council. The Savannah Youth Futures Authority (SYFA) provides an interesting example of how a community has shared lessons with the Policy Council and with other communities.

The SYFA began in 1987 with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide integrated services with the goal of improving outcomes for young children. The Foundation provided SYFA with documentation and technical assistance regarding using benchmarks as a way to measure progress toward desired results. The SYFA used this information to help with the articulation of a mission, principles, strategic goals, and 10 benchmarks. These benchmarks are now regularly reported and used to measure progress toward achieving the SYFA's vision for children.

The director of the SYFA, Otis Johnson, has been a key leader in sharing the insights of SYFA with the Georgia Policy Council. These insights have been especially important, as SYFA has been on the vanguard of the movement to use benchmarks of child well-being to examine and modify service strategies. SYFA uses the benchmark data in multiple ways. It reports the ten benchmarks to the state for inclusion in the Policy Council report. It also uses benchmarks to monitor progress toward desired results. In addition, SYFA couples benchmarks with evaluation data to understand why changes are occurring. For example, to monitor progress in the target area of a Family Resource Center, SYFA has been collecting and reporting benchmark data on that target area compared to other regions within Savannah/Chatham County. If benchmarks are not achieved, SYFA examines service strategies to determine if modifications are needed. Table 7 illustrates how the SYFA uses benchmarks to monitor and document its progress.

Table 7. Excerpts from *Youth Futures Authority: 1996 Children's Profile* [32]

Change in Status for Crime, Birth, Infant Mortality, and Education Indicators in the Family Resource Center Target Neighborhood

Low Birth Weight Babies to Black Mothers		**1993** N	%	**1994** N	%	**% Point Change**
Teens	Target area	10	10.8	12	12.8	+2.0
	Other Chatham	35	14.6	45	18.4	+3.8
Adults	Target Area	26	14.4	26	12.7	-1.7
	Other Chatham	116	16.2	105	15.0	-1.2

Source: Metis Associates, Inc., 1996

[32] Public Service Center, Armstrong State College. (1996). *The 1996 children's profile. A status report to the Savannah-Chatham county community on the well-being of our children.* Savannah, GA: Author.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES MANDATED BY THE BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY AND PLANNING ACT OF 1993

The passage of the Budget Accountability and Planning Act set into motion the movement toward institution of a statewide requirement that all current expenditures reflect performance measures. Under this legislation, each agency must produce a strategic plan, and the state as a whole must produce a strategic plan.

History of the Budget Accountability and Planning Act

In April 1993, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Budget Accountability and Planning Act, SB 335. This law institutes a statewide requirement that all current expenditures reflect performance measures and major provisions of the law, including results-based budgeting. In addition, it grants selected agencies expenditure flexibility in exchange for demonstrating progress toward desired goals. Comprehensive evaluations will be conducted for each state program selected by the General Assembly, with the intent that all programs be evaluated at least once every 10 years.

The Budget Accountability Act requires that the state as well as each agency produce a strategic plan. Strategic plans are to include agency goals and directions, as well as objectives and strategies toward meeting the objectives (See SB 335 for a full list of the changes in state government authorized under this law[33]).

The Process of Developing Strategic Plans

Office of Planning and Budget Is Responsible for Producing State Plan
Staff from the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) have been responsible for producing the state strategic plan for Georgia. To fulfill the statutory requirements of the Budget Act, the OPB presented the first plan in January 1997. This plan "contains a comprehensive vision for the future of Georgia."[34]

OPB staff report that the development of the plan was time-consuming; sources note that "the plan took a few years to develop because we wanted the initial plan developed and approved with as much involvement as we could get." The strategic plan is seen as "a living document" and will be changed to reflect changes in state government.

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[33] Georgia General Assembly. (1993). Senate bill 335.

[34] Office of Planning and Budget. *1997 Strategic plan.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

The strategic plan focuses on six major areas:

- Education;
- Crime and public safety;
- Economic development;
- Human services;
- The environment; and
- Efficient and effective state government.

The state strategic plan lays out the vision for each of the six areas, describes current initiatives, details what needs to be done, and notes the desired results to achieve the vision. These major areas do not address every aspect of state government, but were chosen because, as sources note, they were seen as critical to setting the direction for state government in moving into the 21st century. Table 8 provides an example of selected information in the human services area.

Table 8. Example Page from Strategic Plan [35]

HUMAN SERVICES

VISION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES *(below is an example of the beginning of the vision)*

All Georgians want and strive for a good quality of life for themselves and for their families. All children should be able to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment which allows them to develop to their fullest potential. The human services delivery system of the future will be:

- Family-focused, building on family strengths and resources;
- Accountable;
- Community-based; and
- Systematic.

CURRENT INITIATIVES *(8 are listed, below is an example of one)*

The Family Connection

The Family Connection is the result of the governor's request that the Georgia Departments of Children and Youth Services, Education, Human Resources, and Medical Assistance work together to develop a community-based collaborative approach to integrate services for children and families at risk. Funded by a $5 million grant from the Woodruff Foundation, the Family Connection initially targeted 15 pilot communities. There are currently 70 Family Connection communities.

[35] Dept. of Human Services. *Strategic plan.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

As the need for human services grows, state policymakers are constantly challenged to discover and develop new and better ways of helping individuals become more productive and responsible. These services must offer a hand-up instead of a handout to its citizens in need. Georgia has already begun to transform its service delivery system for children and families. The task now is to build on the successes, fix the shortcomings, and do all that is possible to protect children and strengthen families. *(9 areas are specified, below is an example of three)*

- Continue development of a community-based, family-focused, and prevention-oriented service strategy;
- Improve coordination at the state level and among state, local, and private human service providers; and
- Empower communities with increased responsibility, authority, and flexibility to achieve measurable results, including development of strategic plans and pooling of resources.

DESIRED RESULTS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

Results-based accountability is fundamental to improving the lives of children and families. Without a strong focus on results, developing and sustaining political and public support will be difficult. The following goals and objectives are examples of the kind of results human services providers should expect to achieve in the long term. *(5 are listed, two examples are provided below.)*

- Improved family functioning, including increased family stability, reduced incidence of child abuse, and decreased pregnancy rates for teenagers; and
- Improved family economic capacity, including increased employment, reduced number of families dependent on public assistance, and decreased number of children living in poverty.

Office of Planning and Budget Assists with Process of Developing Agency Strategic Plans
The Budget Act charges the OPB with overseeing the development and implementation of a process for strategic planning and outcome based budgeting. The law requires every agency to develop a strategic plan with vision, mission, and objectives. The next step is to develop outcomes. The strategic plans will include results and will be updated in a way that is consistent with the state strategic plan.

OPB has made time and staff commitments to the budgeting for results efforts. Staff from OPB have been meeting with state agencies weekly to assist with preparation of the strategic plans and outcomes. OPB plans to allow agency directors to select the number and type of outcomes.

One challenge noted by OPB staff is assisting with the shift from process measures to outcomes. Staff noted, "this requires a change in mindset." Sources noted that decision-makers and program providers "aren't used to making decisions like this." Staff realize that time and training are required for this shift to occur.

Use of Results Orientation

Results Intended to Be Used for Budgeting Purposes

Data on results from state agencies are intended to be used for budgeting purposes. These data are seen as one important source of information for legislators to use in the budgeting process. In addition, the process of developing the measures is seen as important in shifting government workers toward a common vision. Sources note that agency directors have "bought into" the vision, and that progress is being made with mid-level managers.

CONCLUSION:
GEORGIA ENCOURAGES RISK TAKING TO IMPROVE RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

The low ranking on the KIDS COUNT report in the early 1990s established a climate in Georgia supportive of innovative approaches to improving child and family outcomes. Innovative strategies were attempted because sources note that at the time, "there was no place to go but up." The media, citizens, and leaders recognized both the failure of the current system and the necessity for change. Strong leadership, foundation funding, and support from diverse stakeholders led to a concerted effort for innovative approaches to change the service system. This climate of risk-taking led to the establishment of the Policy Council, the Family Connection Communities, the Community Partnerships, and Budgeting for Results. Many in the state attribute the improvement in child well-being (up to 43rd in the 1996 KIDS COUNT report) to these innovations.

At the same time, Georgia began to recognize the importance of working with communities, as well as at the state level, in order to improve child and family outcomes. Therefore, the Policy Council created top-down and bottom-up approaches to focus citizens, policymakers, program providers, and other stakeholders on results. These approaches have successfully mobilized support for the benchmarks. Numerous sources note that individuals, leaders, and workers have been using benchmarks to focus efforts on results. Because diverse groups both at the grassroots and at the state are using the benchmarks, many believe the focus on improving child and family outcomes may be sustained over changes in political administrations.

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OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objective of this case study is to describe the design, development, and implementation of Georgia's RBA efforts, particularly those related to programs serving children and families. This report is directed toward people who are interested in learning about the efforts of this state and/or who may have a role in developing an RBA system in their own state, locality, or institution. The case study discusses the key RBA efforts in the state, the impetus for and history of these efforts, the governance structures, the design and implementation of these efforts (including the identification of goals, indicators, and targets), the current or proposed use of the systems, and some of the lessons learned.

Scope

HFRP has produced RBA case studies of eight states: Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Vermont. The research for these case studies was conducted between January 1996 and November 1997.

Methodology

HFRP staff utilized qualitative data collection methodologies to gather the information included in these case studies. Staff began the selection of the eight states chosen for our case studies by contacting key informants from national organizations who have been working in the area of RBA. These key informants nominated a number of states that were currently planning, designing, and/or implementing RBA systems for child and family programs. HFRP staff then contacted staff in these states and reviewed documents to learn more about the nature of their efforts. Additionally, HFRP contacted staff in a number of other states to learn if they were engaged in the development of RBA systems for child and family programs and, if so, what the nature of efforts was. Based on this research, HFRP staff identified the efforts of eighteen states, which are highlighted in our publication, *Resource Guide of Results-Based Accountability Efforts: Profiles of Selected States (1997).*

From the eighteen states profiled, HFRP selected eight states to study in-depth. The eight case study states were chosen because they represent different foci as well as various stages of development. These states are implementing a variety of accountability approaches, including statewide and agency-level strategic planning, performance-based budgeting, and performance-based contracting. Each state has conceptualized and developed its system in response to its needs, as well as the technical, organizational, and political constraints within which it operates.

To obtain information on each of the eight states' RBA efforts, HFRP staff reviewed a variety of documentation and conducted extensive telephone interviews with key informants at the state and local levels. Staff then conducted week-long site visits to each state. During each site visit, staff interviewed a number of personnel from governors' offices, state and local agencies, legislatures, advocacy groups, and universities. During these interviews, interviewees were asked about the key aspects of the conceptualization, development, and implementation of RBA

systems. They were also asked about challenges they faced in developing these efforts and the lessons that they had learned. Where possible, HFRP staff also attended planning meetings around RBA work. For each case study, HFRP interviewed at least 30 individuals with a variety of affiliations to obtain a comprehensive and varied view of the state's efforts.

Given the variety of RBA efforts in states, the multiple entities and actors involved, and the many components of these efforts, HFRP staff developed a multi-level analytic framework to examine the data. This framework enabled HFRP to code interview data by four categories: the system (for example, strategic planning, performance budgeting, performance contracting); the governance level (for example, statewide, inter-agency, agency, local entity); the aspect of the system (for example, history, design and implementation, uses, barriers and opportunities, sustainability); and the actor (for example, governor's staff; legislators/staff; agency staff; advocacy groups). In some cases, these dimensions were further refined. This multiple coding enabled HFRP staff to compile comprehensive descriptions of efforts in each state based on a variety of perspectives. This framework also enabled staff to examine a variety of cross-case themes (for example, the use of budgeting systems by legislatures across states and the processes agencies in different states have used to choose goals and indicators). A qualitative software package, NUD*IST©, facilitated analysis of the data.

We recognize that RBA systems are evolving and will continue to evolve in response to both implementation challenges and state and national policy changes. Therefore, we stress that the information contained in these case studies describes these states' RBA initiatives as of November 1997.

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